

Caregiver Connection

November 2009

A monthly publication for Washington state foster and adoptive families and relative caregivers

Creating a connection

Sharing our knowledge



Many of you are probably aware of the Children's Administration and Foster Parent Consultation Team, commonly called the 1624 Committee. In 2007, HB 1624 was passed by the Washington State Legislature, creating a team of foster parents and CA staff who meet regularly to strengthen services to children and caregivers. These groups have proven to be an effective forum for identifying and working on issues of importance to foster parents. And in the process, positive relationships have been forged. Committee members appreciate the opportunity these groups provide for getting to know other foster parents and the CA staff who partner in this work with creativity in addressing issues and finding common ground.

Every region has its own 1624 group to address local issues. Each of the regional groups elects two representatives (one each year) who will attend quarterly statewide meetings with CA management and program staff. Each local group selects two issues to put on the statewide agenda. Leadership and planning are shared at both the regional and statewide levels.

November is elections month for the regional groups. This is a great time to get involved! Contact one of your local representatives if you would like your foster parent voice to be heard!

1624 Statewide Regional Foster Parent Representatives

REGION 1

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REGION 6

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Another new training resource for foster parents and relative caregivers

Are you caring for a child who has one or more parents in prison or jail? This is a reality for many children in out of home or relative placement. Did you know that even if a parent is incarcerated, they still need to be provided court-ordered services such as visitation? How can you work effectively with social workers and birth parents on this issue, while ensuring that the child(ren) in your care receive the support and services they need? These and many other questions are addressed through a new online video training called Working Effectively with Children of the Incarcerated, their Parents and Caregivers, available at: <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/onGoingVid.asp>. You can receive credit for each module of the training that you complete. You may also be interested in viewing a copy of a DSHS publication called Beyond the Walls: A Guide to Services for Families Affected by Incarceration, available at: <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/pdf/Publications/22-1288.pdf>.

Meet Shala and Frank Crow



Frank and Shala with their kids Kalina, Kyler, Kaden, Seth, Joydyn, and Deven

You just never know where it is going to lead when you attend a PTO meeting. For Shala and Frank Crow, a presentation at their kids' school changed their lives!

One night, the agenda was a presentation about foster care. The presenter talked about the need for homes and caring families. When Shala told Frank, his response was, "Why don't we do that?" Their family has now expanded from their 3 birth children (now 21, 18, and 17 years old), to include 3 adopted children (now 12, 10, and 7 years old), and, currently, 2 foster children (ages 7 and 4). Shala says that now, when Frank gets home from work, his question for her, with a smile on his face, is, "How many we got today?"

It is clear that both Shala and Frank have found a passion in being foster parents. Shala says it is the most selfless and rewarding thing one can ever do. In addition, she has been working as the Fostering Together liaison in Ferndale for the past two years, and she was elected as a Region 3 representative to the statewide Foster Parent Consultation Group (1624 committee) when it was formed in 2007. Her desire was to advocate for change and be a voice for foster parents.

Activities around the Crow household include baseball, football, and wrestling. The girls are into music and dance. You will also find them at Girl Scouts and showing animals with 4-H at the summer fair. Other faves include fishing, campfires (with marshmallows, of course!), and now and then a good movie.

Shala and Frank say that the thing that keeps them doing this work is the opportunity to love a child and make a change in their life. Shala says, "To look back and see how they entered my home and the growth they make in their social skills, behaviors, and to watch their little spirits bloom is what keeps me being a foster family." Shala and Frank have indeed found a passion.

You can too.

Be a key communicator for the Washington State's Early Learning Plan

In June 2009, Governor Chris Gregoire asked Department of Early Learning (DEL) and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to work together to ensure all Washington children have the benefit of early childhood education.

In August 2009, leaders from DEL, OSPI, Thrive by Five Washington and other groups decided to merge the ongoing work to create a statewide early learning plan with the work of the "drafting team," so that we have one common deadline, process and product.

A report and legislative proposal will be delivered to the Governor by December 1, 2009, with the draft early learning plan to date. A comprehensive early learning plan will be finalized in March 2010. Information helpful to this process can be found at these two websites: <http://www.washingtonlearns.wa.gov> or <http://earlylearning.org>.

The Early Learning Advisory Committee (ELAC) Early Learning Plan Management Team serves as final decision-maker for the process and products. It also updates and regularly solicits feedback from the full ELAC. Work groups are identifying key outcomes and indicators, and drafting sections of the plan in the areas of:

- Access to Health
- Social/Emotional Development
- Early Care and Education/Child Care
- Parent and Community Partnerships
- Meaningful Engagement and Diversity

For more information regarding key outcomes and indicators please go to <http://www.del.wa.gov/partnerships/elac/elp.aspx>

How you can be part of the early learning planning:

We welcome public input on the early learning plan development. We've created a "key communicator" group of people who provide regular input and respond to e-mailed questions as the plan is created. If you would like to be a "key communicator," please e-mail communications@del.wa.gov.

College bound scholarship

- Provides hope and incentive for students and families who might not consider college because of cost.
- State-funded scholarship pays tuition and fees at public college rates, plus \$500 for books.
- 7th and 8th grade students may apply if they meet one of the following:
 - Are eligible for free and reduced-price lunch
 - Receive TANF benefits
 - Meet the family income requirement
 - Are a foster youth (regardless of income)
- To receive the scholarship, students promise to:
 - Graduate from high school with a 2.0 GPA or higher
 - Demonstrate good citizenship
 - Be accepted to a college and file a FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)
- Apply online: www.hecb.wa.gov/collegebound

Childhood abuse seems to impact gene involved in depression

The investigation, which appeared online this month in the *American Journal of Medical Genetics*, was led by the University of Georgia and involved the University of Iowa. In particular, the team found that in men and women reporting childhood abuse there are changes in the regulatory area that controls the expression of the gene that is the key regulator of serotonin and whose protein product is the primary target of most antidepressants.

(Media-Newswire.com) – A new study finds a possible link between childhood abuse and changes to a molecular process – gene methylation – that controls a gene associated with depression.

The investigation was led by the University of Georgia and involved the University of Iowa. In particular, the team found that in men and women reporting childhood abuse there are changes in the regulatory area that controls the expression of the gene that is the key regulator of serotonin and whose protein product is the primary target of most antidepressants.

A previous UI study showed that variations in this gene are linked to depression. This current study now suggests that changes to a regulatory area of the gene could separately or additionally affect the gene function.

According to Steve Beach, director of the Institute of Behavioral Research at the University of Georgia, "It may be that childhood maltreatment leaves a lasting mark, and this may be important as we look for new ways to help those who have experienced childhood maltreatment, including longer-term effects."

"The effects seem to be stronger for women, and the nature of child maltreatment is often different for men and women, with sexual abuse being more common for women," Beach said. "So we will need to continue to closely examine the gender differences in future work." "Once we replicate the basic effect, it will still be important to identify connections to specific long-term outcomes, and then this will bring us one step closer to improved prevention efforts," Beach said.

ABSTRACT:

<http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/122591436/abstract>

Community support for foster children at the holidays

Local community programs are already gearing up for the upcoming holiday season. CA receives requests this time of year from many of these community partners who want to provide support at the holidays to children with open CA cases through generous donations from corporations as well members of the community. If you have a child with an open CA case in care in your home this Christmas season, this child may be eligible for referral by CA to one of these programs.

If you have not yet received information from CA about registering a child in your care for one of these holiday gift programs, or if you have questions about the child's eligibility for referral to a holiday gift program, please contact the child's social worker as soon as possible. (Note: Individual community programs may have various eligibility criteria for participation, and not all children with open CA cases qualify for referral to a program.)

However, DCFS staff may also have information about other community resources that support families during the holidays.)

Post Adoption **Support**

Questions and answers

Q: What should be considered when negotiating the monthly cash payment?

A: When you sit down to negotiate your child's subsidy agreement, there are two factors that can be considered:

- The needs of the child
- The circumstances of the family

Obviously, the needs of the child pertain to his or her special medical or emotional needs. "Family circumstances" have been defined by the federal Children's Bureau as meaning a family's ability to incorporate a child's needs into the family circumstances. Income, debt, housing, transportation, space, family size, parental occupations, parental health needs, the needs of other family members, and any number of other factors must all be looked at together. There is no set formula. Needs and circumstances are unique to the family.

It is important to remember that the monthly cash payment can be changed through modification of the agreement, if the child's needs change. You do not need to negotiate based on what you anticipate will be problems as the child ages. Some families do not need or take monthly cash payment until a few years after the child is adopted. As long as an agreement is in place before the adoption is finalized, the agreement can change to help you meet the needs of the child.

Regional Contacts

Region 1 – Spokane

Jan Lammers* 509-363-3383
Pam Copeland* 509-363-3379

Region 2 – Yakima

Steve Bergland* 509-225-6500
Carol Cyr 509-225-6531
(Financial Specialist)

Region 3 – Monroe

Steve Foster* 360-805-3032
Linda Richardson* 360-805-3030

Region 4 – Bellevue

Aaron Washington* 425-590-3072
Jenne Norris 425-590-3069
(Social Worker)

Region 5 – Tacoma

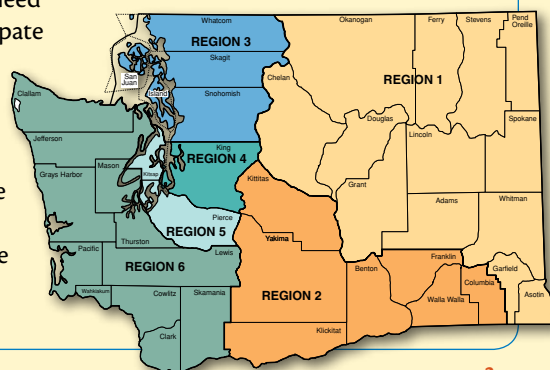
Cindy Anderson* 253-983-6359
Laura Davis* 253-983-6281

Region 6 – Tumwater

Cheryl Barrett* 360-725-6758
Kim Mower* 360-725-6778

Toll free number: 1-800-562-5682
(listen carefully to the recorded message)

* Adoption Support Consultants



Important numbers to know when you take care of children in out-of-home care

Foster Parent and Caregiver Crisis and Support Line: 1-800-301-1868

ON-GOING AND CRISIS SUPPORTS FOR FOSTER PARENTS

Under contracts with the state, three private agencies are working to build supports for you within the foster care community. Supports include hubs, support groups, and matching new foster parents with veteran foster parents. To get connected:

- If you live in Eastern Washington, the Olympic Peninsula down through Pacific County or from Thurston County to Clark County, call 1-888-794-1794.
- If you live in King County or any counties north of King County, call 206-605-0664.
- If you live in Pierce or Kitsap counties, call 253-473-9252.
- If you live in King County, the Friends of Youth CARE program provides short-term counseling, education and support to help you care for your most difficult children. 1-888-263-3457 or 206-915-0459.

Family Help Line: 1-800-932-HOPE or www.parenttrust.org. The Family Help Line is a free, statewide training and referral line for the families of Washington state. Last year, the Family Help Line received more than 5,000 calls and requests for information. Calls can last up to 90 minutes and parents can call as often as needed.

Support for foster parents under investigation for allegations of abuse or neglect: Foster Parent Investigation Retention Support Team (FIRST) 253-219-6782. Monday through Saturday, 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m., or leave a message and receive a return call within 24 hours.

Foster Parent and Caregiver Crisis and Support Line: 1-800-301-1868

Mental Health Crisis Line Information: The crisis line telephone number for your county or region is available on the DSHS Mental Health Division website at: <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/mentalhealth/crisis.shtml>.

GENERAL FOSTER PARENT INFORMATION FOR THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

FPAWS: Foster Parent Association of Washington State, 1-800-391-CARE (2273) or www.fpaws.org. FPAWS is seeking new members and supporting foster parents in many ways, including referrals to local associations.

Kitsap and Pierce County information about becoming a foster parent or to receive foster parent support: Foster Care Resource Network, 253-473-9252. Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. or leave a message and receive a return call by the next business day.

RESOURCE INFORMATION AVAILABLE STATEWIDE

Get connected to information on resources in your area by calling 211 – a toll free number.

Children's Administration Foster Parent Website:

<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/>

Children's Administration Foster Parent Training Website – Trainings are open to all licensed foster parents, licensed relative caregivers and unlicensed caregivers. For information about foster parent and caregiver training, check out:

<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/training.asp>

CHILDREN'S ADMINISTRATION FOSTER CARE LISTSERV

Join the 400 people who have subscribed to the List Serve

<http://listserv.wa.gov/cgi-bin/wa?SUBED1=fosterparents&&A=1> for updated information on resources for the work you do in caring for children.

Family Planning Services are designed to help avoid unwanted or mistimed pregnancy and are available through your local Community Service Office (CSO). Each CSO has a full time Family Planning Nurse to help provide services to Medicaid eligible clients. There is also a Family Planning hotline number 1-800-770-4334.

Join the Listserv!

We have mentioned the foster parent listserv in recent months and have encouraged you to join in order to receive information quickly and easily. This is one more reminder to do this today! Log on to <http://listserv.wa.gov> to subscribe.

With the coming change in payment systems, we will no longer be able to send your Caregiver Connection monthly with your check. Our current plan is to send it to you electronically through the listserv. We plan to start this new process with the February newsletter. And of course, you can always access not only the current newsletter, but archived newsletters as well at <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/index.asp>.

For those of you avoiding the electronic age, we will have a limited capacity to send the Caregiver Connection by mail. In order to receive a "hard copy" newsletter, please contact Dinah Martin at 360-902-0740.

A great new information resource for you!

The Department of Social and Health Services, Children's Administration is pleased to announce the creation of a lending library for books, tapes and other materials for use by Washington State Foster Parents and Kinship Caregivers.

The lending library is a collaboration with the states of Alaska and Oregon and Northwest Resource Associates, a multi-faceted non-profit agency devoted to providing an array of essential services for the human services community.

Caregivers will be able to request materials from the library at the Resource Family Training Institute website at fosterparent.dshs.wa.gov or by calling 1-877-517-0820. There will be a catalog of materials posted on the Resource Family Training Institute (RFTI) website. Copies of the catalog will be made available to RFTI trainers and Kinship Navigators, statewide, as well. Training credit is available for completed books and videos.

The library is available to all caregivers with a Washington zip code.

All postage will be paid by DSHS for caregivers in Washington. Materials will be mailed out in a re-usable pouch with postage pre-paid for the return of materials. The service will be housed in Portland, Oregon at the Oregon Post-Adoptive Resource Center.

Caregivers who are interested in this service can contact the Resource Family Training Institute Lending Library at 1-877-517-0820 or by accessing the Library at <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/index.asp>.